

Marketing @ your library™

Marketing Handouts used by Mary Jo Ryan, Nebraska Library Commission

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Know Your Community

Exercise

"The needs of communities vary; no two are exactly alike. Careful assessment of a specific community's needs and planning to meet these needs is essential to a successful outreach program."
(Trotta, 1993)

Make a list of seven to ten organizations (clubs, agencies, groups, businesses, etc.) that are potential library partners or potential library customers. Give special considerations to organizations that serve customers who are unserved or underserved by the library. Use your local newspaper, telephone directory, other local directories, or other appropriate resources for this assignment. Be sure to follow instructions [A through E](#) (below) for each of the organizations you list here:

List of Organizations

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.
- 6.
- 7.
- 8.
- 9.
- 10.

For each of the organizations you listed above, provide the following information:

- A. Name, address and telephone number for a contact person in the organization.
- B. Existing library services and products that could benefit the organization.
- C. Potential library services and products that could benefit the organization.
- D. Possible activities that would communicate--or market--the library's services and products to the organization. (For example, offsite demonstrations or training, speaking engagements, etc.)
- E. How would an association with this organization benefit the library?

Discussion: Know Your Community

After completing the assignment, process the following discussion items:

- Why do you think that this step is important in the planning and marketing process?
- You all know your own community pretty well, don't you? Even those of us that have lived in our communities for a very long time can sometimes learn something new by a systematic look at it. The community profile may help you identify groups represented in the community that are not making as much use of library services as they could.

- Information that surprised you
- Information that confirmed your suspicions

then:

- Determine groups of customers that may be underserved
- Select a target group, determine groups of customers or potential customers that may be underserved.
- Select a group of customers or potential customers as your target market.

- What do you know about their:

Personality

Image

Values

Lifestyle (dress, home furnishings, etc.)

Aspirations (how they wish they dressed, furnished, etc.)

- How might you communicate with them that you have library services to fit their:

Personality

Image

Values

Lifestyle (dress, home furnishings, etc.)

Aspirations (how they wish they dressed, furnished, etc.)

Conduct a Communications Audit

"The true marketer's philosophy considers that it is the organization that must be willing to adapt its offering to the customer and not vice versa. Collections and programs are driven by what is known about the needs of the target market and may or may not parallel traditional library service offerings."
(Dimick, 1995)

Conducting a communications audit can be a frightening exercise. A communications audit helps us to understand what our customers and potential customers think of library services and how well we communicate about the library.

At this point in the process, "perception is reality" and even if we disagree with the information we receive from the community, we have to consider it in the planning process.

There are a number of ways to conduct a communications audit: Most libraries use a

- **survey**
- **focus groups**
- **community meetings**
- **other**

Conducting a series of key informant interviews can give you a qualitative "report card" from your target customer group. Key informants are individuals who represent a specific segment of the target group and can provide a unique perspective about needs and expectations. Choose the key informants without bias. In other words, select those you interview from a cross section of the target customer group, not just from customers who are known to be supportive of the library.

The interview should revolve around a few simple questions designed to elicit **information about library service needs, expectations, and perceptions of how well the library meets these library service needs.** Be sure to ask a question that will help you assess the individual's perceptions of your existing communication activities.

Interview as many key informants as you need to get a broad picture of the target group. For example, if your target group consists of commuters who live in your town and travel an hour or more each day to work, then six-to-eight interviews might suffice. On the other hand, if your target group is senior citizens, you may need to interview twenty or more individuals from a variety of living situations, interest groups, etc.

"Marketing without planning is an exercise; planning without marketing is a formality."
(Weingand, 1995)

In order to **match the target customers with the library activities, products, and services that will meet their needs**, it is important to know as much as possible about every aspect of the library and its services. An understanding of the current internal conditions is the beginning of the internal marketing audit process and is essential for effective planning.

Budget

- What is the annual budget for the library?
- What are the funding streams and who controls them?
- Are there line items for the essential operational expenses as well as for proposed changes in programming and/or services?
- How do you determine how much money is needed for each line item?

Staff

- How many people, including volunteers, work in your library?
- What are the strengths and weaknesses of staff?
- What types of training and continuing education do they need?

Condition of the Library

- How would you describe the overall condition of the library facility?
- How much space is there for attractive arrangement of the collection?
- How would you arrange the library differently if you had more space available?
- Do you have the necessary wiring, telephone lines, and electrical outlets to provide services?
- Do you have the necessary equipment and furnishings to provide services?

Library Services

List some library activities, products and services that might meet the needs of your target market:

Current:

Future:

Discussion: Know Your Library

You all know your own library pretty well, don't you? (See [Know Your Library](#).) Even those of us who have worked in our libraries for a very long time can sometimes learn something new by taking a systematic look at it.

Guided Visualization

Try to approach this with a fresh eye. Pretend that you are a member of your target group, a person with no experience with the library. Put yourself in their shoes and record your observations as you walk up the sidewalk to the library, through the door and all through the library. Start at the street or in the parking lot. Notice the exterior signage and condition of your library. How are customers greeted when they enter the library? Is the library arrangement convenient, easily accessible? Is your library signage easy to read? Is it easy to spot library staff? Are the staff members approachable? What barriers to the library's staff and materials do library users face?

Photo Safari and Analysis

One way to really get to know your library is to try to see it through the eyes of a stranger by studying photographs of your library. Work with your co-workers to take photographs of your library. Take the photographs from the point of view of the customer. Go outside and enter the library through the door that your customers use. Try to look at everything you see with fresh eyes and take pictures from the perspective of someone who has never been in the library before. As much as possible, it is important to analyze the photos from the point of view of someone who is not familiar with the library. Try to involve individuals who are not current library customers in this analysis.

Mystery patrons

Involve others in this assessment. Involve some of the folks you identified earlier and if possible, involve people who represent the target group. Ask them to “mystery shop” the library. Ask them to critique your slide show of library photos.

- Assess existing library services and products to meet the needs of the target group. What do you have now? Do new products need to be developed? Repackaged?
- Based on the target group, select a product to serve their needs; if possible, select a technology service as the product. The outreach plan will be based on this target group and this product.
- Determine what you need to learn to sell the product?
- Determine how you'll learn what you need to know—familiarize yourself with the products and services that match the needs of the target group

Marketing Planning Partnership Worksheet

Target Group	Product	Outreach Activities	Partner Possibilities/Benefit	Contact Person	When	Expected Outcome

Merchandising in the Library

What is merchandising?

Merchandising is a systematic process of effectively positioning, presenting, and displaying consumer products (books, magazines, cds, talking books, videos, audio tapes, computer access, etc.) in the trafficway, at the point of purchase, or the point of use. It is part of the overall organization of the library--the way you place materials to best serve your specific customers, the way you organize your library to make it easy for your customers to find what they need.

What are the goals of merchandising?

Cut through the clutter--customers are bombarded by visual clutter.

Ease customer negotiation.

Save customer time.

Save customer embarrassment ("in-group" vs. "out-group").

Move the product.

What are the components of merchandising?

Correct Inventory (sufficient quantity)

Optimal Positioning (place)

Proper Presentation (look)

What types of merchandising decisions do libraries need to consider?

Housekeeping

Display fixtures

Signage (library-front and in-library)

Color Scheme

Lighting

Texture

Scale

Placement

Traffic flow

Display Types:

In-Library Feature (Freestanding, Endcap, Wall, Ceiling)

Window

Point of Purchase

Point of Use

How is merchandising used in the library setting?

Merchandising views transactions from the customer's point of view, so it is based on **assessment and planning—everything you learned about your target market:**

- Personality

- Image

- Values

- Lifestyle (dress, home furnishings, etc.)

- Aspirations (how they wish they dressed, furnished)

Hints for Library Merchandising

- Remember that merchandising is visual communication. It is not about personal taste or style. It is about following the principles of simple, clear graphic communication.
- Use bold graphics with large, crisp type. **Sans serif** type is best. Make it big and then double the size.
- Avoid all caps.
- Avoid acronyms and library jargon.
- Avoid visual clutter, the "bulletin board" look of many little items and elements clustered together.
- Avoid italics, except for a single word here and there for emphasis.
- Imitate bookstores. You can copy their displays and signage. Strongly suggest "topic-specific" signs on top of shelving.
- Beware the temptation of too many props. Edit. Use a few props and photographs (or better yet, huge blowups of book covers) as backdrop and then stack up the books (face-out) with a note that says:

Take these books.

Check them out now.

- Take advantage of impulse pick-up.
- Change displays every month or more often.
- Cover all surfaces as much as possible, increasing merchandise intensity.
- Use cross-merchandising. For example, a gardening display featuring books, magazines, videos, cds, free copies of brochures, and printouts of your list of Internet Gardening sites.
- Think of each of your library departments as a shop within a store. Use visual cues to direct people to the shop within a store. Copy the way department stores do this. Use the flooring, walls, flags, signs, etc.
- Good merchandising moves goods quickly. Consider a display a success if you have to keep replenishing it!

Scavenger Hunt

Work with co-workers/board members to find good examples of:

Signage

Bold graphics

Front outdoor

Inside library

Cross-merchandising

Shop within the shop

Housekeeping

Display fixtures

- Color scheme
- Texture
- Scale
- Placement
- Traffic flow
- Displays
 - In-library feature display
 - Window display
 - Point of Purchase display
 - Point of Use display
- Brainstorm changes you can make to improve merchandising

Evaluate Marketing Efforts

Weingand recommends two levels of evaluation. Program monitoring as the marketing campaign progresses and a "summary" evaluation when it is complete or in full operation. Leerburger (1989, p. 13) describes **marketing evaluation**: "The final concept is simply a check on the effectiveness of the entire marketing process. Did the marketing program meet its goals? What were the strengths or weaknesses in the program? What changes, if any, should be made if the program is to be repeated? Has the program improved library services to specifically targeted segments of the community? If so, what plans can be made to inform the community of those improvements?"

Get Feedback /Evaluate the Outcome

Analyze partner contacts. What do they think of the relationship? How will you find out?

Analyze customer contacts. How has the relationship changed between the target group and the library? Has this made an impact on their lives? How will you find out the answers to these questions?

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